

NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
POLITICAL FEATURE 1-0792
JOSEPH SULLIVAN

MAY 17, 1976

SOUTH KOREA: PROGRESS AND VIGILANCE

ANNCR:

TWO U.S. CABINET MEMBERS WILL HOLD SEPARATE TALKS SOON WITH SOUTH KOREAN OFFICIALS. SECRETARY OF COMMERCE ELLIOT RICHARDSON WILL ATTEND THE SEVENTH U.S.-KOREA COMMERCE MINISTERS MEETING IN SEOUL, WHICH OPENS SATURDAY (MAY 22). AND NEXT WEEK SECRETARY OF DEFENSE DONALD RUMSFELD WILL TRAVEL TO HAWAII TO CONFER WITH SOUTH KOREAN MILITARY OFFICIALS ON U.S.-KOREAN SECURITY ISSUES. THE TWO MEETINGS UNDOUBTEDLY WILL DWELL HEAVILY ON SOUTH KOREA'S ECONOMIC STRAITS AND DEFENSE POSTURE..SUBJECTS WHICH OF LATE HAVE RECEIVED FREQUENT ATTENTION IN THE WORLD PRESS. VOA'S JOSEPH SULLIVAN LOOKS AT ONE SUCH REPORT BY A VETERAN REPORTER IN ASIAN AFFAIRS. VOICE:

AUSTRALIAN CORRESPONDENT DENNIS WARNER RECENTLY TRAVELLED TO SOUTH KOREA FOR A FIRST-HAND LOOK AT THAT ASIAN COUNTRY. HIS FINDINGS ARE SUMMARIZED IN AN ARTICLE APPEARING IN THE LATEST EDITION OF THE AMERICAN MAGAZINE, "THE ATLANTIC." SOUTH KOREA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH, MISTER WARNER WRITES, IS SPECTACULAR AND HARD TO BELIEVE. FOR MANY YEARS AFTER WORLD WAR TWO, HE OBSERVES, THE COUNTRY STAGNATED. BUT TODAY, HE SAYS, SOUTH KOREA IS PERFORMING FACTS OF INDUSTRIAL ACROBATICS RARELY SEEN ANYWHERE BEFORE.

PER CAPITA INCOME IN SOUTH KOREA IN 1960 WAS LESS THAN ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS A YEAR. LAST YEAR IT WAS WELL OVER FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS. BY THE INDUSTRIALIZED WORLD'S STANDARDS, WAGES ARE STILL VERY LOW. BUT, AS MISTER WARNER NOTES, IN MORE FUNDAMENTAL WAYS...IN HOUSING, HEALTH, COMMUNICATIONS,

FOOD, AND EDUCATIONSOUTH KOREA HAS LEAPED AHEAD.

THE SOUTH KOREAN ECONOMY IS HEAVILY SUPPORTED BY TWO EXTERNAL ELEMENTS: FOREIGN TRADE AND FOREIGN INVESTMENTS. IN 1960, IT SOLD ONLY THIRTY MILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF GOODS ABROAD. LAST YEAR, ITS EXPORTS EXCEEDED FIVE THOUSAND MILLION DOLLARS IN VALUE. IN THE EARLY 1970'S, MISTER WARNER WRITES, SOUTH KOREA SWALLOWED ITS DEEP AND OLD RESENTMENT OF JAPAN AND BEGAN TO TAKE IN LARGE SCALE JAPANESE CAPITAL. JAPANESE INVESTMENTS NOW TOTAL OVER FIVE HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS... A FACT WHICH HE SAYS "GIVES TOKYO A VESTED ECONOMIC INTEREST IN ADDITION TO ITS STRATEGIC INTEREST IN SOUTH KOREA'S FUTURE." AND THIS INTEREST, HE PREDICTS, IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE.

(OPT) SOUTH KOREA LEADERS, MISTER WARNER SAYS, BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE IN A RACE AGAINST TIME... NOT MERELY TO TURN SOUTH KOREA INTO A SIGNIFICANT INDUSTRIAL POWER AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, BUT ALSO TO CREATE A DEFENSE INDUSTRY THAT WILL SUPPLY VIRTUALLY ALL THE COUNTRY'S NEEDS BY 1980.

(END OPT)

TURNING TO THE POLITICAL SCENE, MISTER WARNER OBSERVES THAT THE YOUNGER GENERATION IN SOUTH KOREA DO INDEED WORRY ABOUT THE LACK OF CIVIL LIBERTIES AND COMPLAIN ABOUT CORRUPTION. YET, HE SAYS, EVEN THE MOST VEHEMENT CRITICS OF PRESIDENT PARK CHUNG HEE GIVE UNQUALIFIED SUPPORT TO HIS NATIONAL PROGRAM. THE IMPORTANT THING, HE WRITES, IS THAT THERE IS A REAL THREAT FROM THE NORTH WHICH IS PERVASIVE AND CONSTANTLY REVIVED BY REPEATED BOMBAST FROM PYONGYANG. THE THREAT, HE ADDS, IS REAL ENOUGH AND EVENTS OF RECENT YEARS HAVE CONVINCED THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE SOUTH KOREANS THAT THE COURSE CHARTED BY THE PARK GOVERNMENT IS THE ONLY SAFE ONE TO FOLLOW.

THE U.S. VIEW IS THAT ANY REDUCTION IN AMERICAN FORCES IN SOUTH KOREA BELOW A CREDIBLE LEVEL MIGHT ENCOURAGE THE NORTH TO MOVE. WHAT PYONGYANG MAY BE TEMPTED TO DO, EVEN AGAINST THE WISHES OF PEKING AND MOSCOW, IS, IN MISTER WARNER'S VIEW, AN UNDERSTANDABLE CAUSE FOR CONCERN. AS FOR PRESSURES TO REUNIFY KOREA, HE ARGUES THAT COMMON SENSE SUGGESTS THAT UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES THE TWO PEOPLE WHO HAVE LIVED FOR MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS UNDER INCOMPATIBLE IDEOLOGIES SHOULD CONTINUE TO LIVE APART. ACCEPTANCE OF THE VIEW THAT REUNIFICATION MAY HAVE TO WAIT FOR ITS TIME TO COME, HE CONCLUDES, WOULD RELIEVE TENSIONS AND REDUCE THE DANGERS ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA.

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